

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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Markey Asks NRC if Florida Utility Dumped Nuclear Waste Illegally

Washington, D.C. – Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Democratic Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, today released an August 8, 2005 letter he sent to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission requesting information about press reports suggesting that Florida Power & Light (FPL) may have illegally dumped nuclear waste at unlicensed sites during the 1970s and 1980s. Florida Power and Light is one of the nation's largest utilities, and owns nearly 3,500 megawatts of generation in New England, including the Seabrook nuclear power plant, which is located just 40 miles north of Boston.

"I'm very concerned by these reports suggesting that Florida Power and Light, a company that owns 82% of the Seabrook nuclear power plant, may have engaged in illegal nuclear waste dumping activities down in Florida.," said Rep. Markey.

Rep. Markey added, "If these reports are true, they paint a disturbing picture of Florida Power & Light's nuclear waste dumping practices."

Rep. Markey's letter was prompted by an August 7, 2005 article that appeared in the New York Times, which reported that the company, "appears to have shipped radioactive waste to ordinary landfills, municipal sewage treatment plants, and some unknown locations in the 1970's and early 1980's." According to the Times article, while the company reportedly said in 1982 that it had mistakenly made a shipment to a landfill, "the documents appear to show numerous shipments to multiple locations." In addition, the article reports that "while the company conducted a survey and cleanup in the one known location, it found only one kind of radioactive material, and nuclear experts involved in...lawsuits [against the company] say there must have been other isotopes for which no tests were conducted."

The Times article goes on to report that State of Florida documents obtained by plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the company have found contamination at levels far in excess of State and EPA standards. It also cites state documents indicating that some contaminated material was transported to a "cow pasture" and that other materials were removed to an

“unknown site.” The Times reports that the plaintiffs in this litigation are alleging that the company concealed these shipments from the Commission.

Rep. Markey’s letter asked the NRC to respond to several questions about Florida Power & Light’s nuclear waste dumping practices, whether these practices violated applicable laws and regulations, whether the company had fully informed the NRC regarding its actions, and whether the NRC had investigated the matters described in the Times article or conducted any tests to determine whether public health had been put at risk.

Copies of Rep. Markey’s correspondence with the NRC can be found at Rep. Markey’s website: www.house.gov/markey.